

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 05881 041521Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5881

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS
SUBJECT: NEW ADVISOR TO PRIME MINISTER

REF: STATE 111800

1. DR. REUVEN HECHT, RECENTLY APPOINTED AS PERSONAL ADVISOR TO THE PRIME MINISTER, IS A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF THE BEGIN FAMILY. HIS ROLE WILL BE THAT OF PERSONAL CONFIDANT TO THE PRIME MINISTER; HE WILL SATISFY BEGIN'S CONTINUING NEED FOR AN OLD FRIEND WITHIN HIS OFFICE, ONE TO WHOM HE CAN TURN TO UNBURDEN AND JUSTIFY HIMSELF. AT BEGIN'S DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON ON APRIL 30, DCM QUERIED BOTH PM'S SPECIAL ADVISOR YEHUDA AVNER AND MFA NORTH AMERICAN DIRECTOR AS TO PRECISE NATURE OF HECHT'S NEW DUTIES. EACH RESPONDED SEPARATELY THAT IF WE FIND OUT WOULD WE LET THEM KNOW. HECHT HAS TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT HE WILL SPEND ABOUT ONE DAY A WEEK IN JERUSALEM--WITHOUT PAY--AS AN "ECONOMIC ADVISOR." HECHT HAD WANTED CABINET POST AS ECONOMIC CZAR, BUT BEGIN COULD NOT OBLIGE SINCE THE LIBERALS HAD CLAIMED ECONOMIC PORTFOLIOS.

2. DR. HECHT IS A WEALTHY, PROMINENT HAIFA INDUSTRIALIST (HIS DEGREE IS IN ECONOMICS). BORN IN ANTWERP IN 1909,
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 05881 041521Z

HE WAS IN PALESTINE DURING THE 1930'S AND SETTLED PERMANENTLY IN ISRAEL IN 1948. HE FOUNDED THE DAGON GRAIN SILO COMPANY (ONE OF ISRAEL'S BEST-MANAGED ENTERPRISES) OF WHICH HE REMAINS CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING DIRECTOR. IN ADDITION HE IS A DIRECTOR OR CHAIRMAN OF VARIOUS LARGE AND MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES. HE IS AN ENTHUSIASTIC PATRON OF THE ARTS, SERVING ON THE BOARD OF TURSTEES OF A NUMBER

OF MUSEUMS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND HAS AN EXTENSIVE PRIVATE ART AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTION.

3. DR. HECHT HAS LONG BEEN A SUPPORTER OF HERUT AND VARIOUS RIGHT-WING CAUSES, WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL MOVEMENT, AND IS A HEAVY CONTRIBUTOR WHO HELPED BEGIN TO PULL THE TEL HAI PENSION FUND OUT OF ITS FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES. HE HAS PERSISTENTLY AVOIDED HOLDING PARTY OR GOVERNMENT OFFICE. HE HAS REPORTEDLY USED HIS FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO HELP THE UNDERPRIVILEGED AND THE HERUT YOUTH MOVEMENT, AND LABOR RELATIONS IN HIS ENTERPRISES ARE SAID TO BE A MODEL FOR ISRAEL. HIS POLITICAL VIEWS ARE HARD-LINE HERUT REVISIONSIT--TO THE RIGHT OF BEGIN'S. LEWIS

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